

Dissent and Reform in Jordan: The Challenge of Progress

By Emad Omar*

Jordan is often touted as a potential model for democratic transformation and political reform in the Arab world and the Middle East. Surrounded by countries experiencing conflict or promoting reckless and tension-creating policies, Jordan is starved of both water and oil with at least half of its population of Palestinian descent—many of them still living in refugee camps¹. The country is also host to hundreds of thousands of Iraqi expatriates and refugees. Yet, this small kingdom has charted a decades-long path of stability, moderation, and tolerance.

Over the past three years, King Abdullah II has inaugurated a series of political reform initiatives. First, there was the vague “Jordan First” campaign, which aimed at spurring reform by focusing citizens’ attention on domestic rather than regional issues and on political development. Second, the ambitious National Agenda, which serves as a ten-year blueprint to guarantee, among other things, fundamental freedoms, human rights, democratic practices, and political pluralism. Finally, with the “We Are all Jordan” document, King Abdullah has made political reform a cornerstone of his rule. Still, initiating reform is easier said than done. Increasingly, critics ask to see quicker and more concrete results.

Jordan appears to have many of the ingredients necessary for fundamental democratic reform. The King has clearly stated his vision for a democratic Jordan, and polls show that a majority of Jordanians want more participation. Although resource poor, Jordan is rich in human capital, with a well-educated population and a growing appreciation for civil society. Together, these ingredients are essential to push forward a successful political reform process.

The process of balancing these reforms while maintaining stability has dominated the discussion. Critics acknowledge progress, but say it is too slow. They argue for more aggressive implementation. However, while most Jordanians conclude that the ingredients of democracy and political reform are present, what is less clear is whether the sum of these ingredients is enough.

Jordanian Potential

Founded in 1921², Jordan is a young state with a relatively young and small population; close to seventy percent of its 5.7 million population is under 30.³ It has a new and relatively small administrative bureaucracy despite underemployment and high public sector employment. In Jordan, political reform does not entail the wrenching political and social challenges that it would in many other countries.

Most Jordanians live in urban areas⁴ and are exposed to the cosmopolitan, tolerant style of city life. Despite being a relatively conservative society, Jordanians are generally tolerant toward the different cultures and refugee communities that coexist in the kingdom. King Abdullah took a major step toward institutionalizing this tradition of tolerance and hospitality with the 2004 Amman Message, which sought to combine authentic Islamic liberalism with a formal rejection of extremism.

¹ Approximately 1.7 million registered Palestinian refugees reside in Jordan.

² Jordan gained its independence from Britain in 1946.

³ Jordanian Department of Statistics (DOS), 2004 Census, Jordan. According to a UN report, 25% of Jordanians are between the ages of 9 and 18, the prime age for schooling.

⁴ Around 70%.

The Amman Message sought to promote Jordan, as well as the Jordanian and Muslim role in promoting human rights and basic liberties, ensuring life, dignity, and security, and guaranteeing basic needs; administering the affairs of society in accordance with the principles of justice and consultation; and benefiting from the goods and mechanisms for adopting democracy that human society has presented.

Despite being resource poor, Jordan has invested heavily in education. Jordanians highly value formal learning. Rates of education and literacy in Jordan are high, even among females, when compared with developed countries.⁵ Jordan's large public and private education infrastructure has attracted foreign students from throughout the region, adding to the diversity and skills of the country. Today, there are over 200,000 Jordanians and foreign students enrolled in a total of 61 public and private universities and colleges.

Because of its dearth of natural resources, Jordan has established good relations with the international community—multilateral institutions and Western governments—that have helped it secure foreign loans and assistance. At the same time, highly educated Jordanians who work abroad send substantial remittances⁶, crucial assistance to many Jordanian families.

Although the November 2005 hotel bombings in Amman shook Jordan, they were the exception, not the rule. Jordan has been stable for a relatively long period. This is a result of significant investment in a strong and effective security apparatus. The fierce loyalty of the security establishment to the monarchy gives the King confidence in introducing, within the larger security strategy, international concepts of human security and rights in the political reform process.

In many countries, democracy and reform are catch phrases, commonly used in official rhetoric but often lacking in substance. In Jordan, however, the education level gives reform greater potential. In September 2005, Jordan University's Center for Strategic Studies released an opinion poll that suggested most Jordanians understand democracy to be "closely related to civil liberties and political rights." The Jordanian concept of democracy did "not differ from the concept of democracy in advanced democratic nations."⁷ The young population, the value placed on education in society, and the large educational infrastructure could be a successful equation for a generation that is socially skilled and supportive of democracy and reform—should a well-tailored curriculum with extra-curricular activities be introduced into the system.

Economic Reform

The Kingdom has had to overcome numerous economic problems. In addition to its limited natural resources, some of the key economic challenges facing Jordan are: high unemployment rates, requiring the creation of 45,000 jobs each year; increasing poverty, as one out every three Jordanians lives under the poverty line; a high external debt burden; large budget deficits; a dependence on foreign grants; an over-populated public sector; unstable neighboring markets; a weak middle class; brain drain; inflation rates; and a rising oil bill.

⁵ The literacy rate is 91% (male 96%, female 86%).

⁶ According to the Ministry of Labor, Jordanian remittances from abroad jumped from \$564 million in 1985 to \$1.7 billion in 2000. Workers' remittances reached JD 410 million for the first three months of 2006, a year-on-year rise of 11 percent.

⁷ Jordanian Center for Strategic Studies, September 2005. See: <http://www.cssjordan.org/polls/democracy/DemocracyPoll2005-en.pdf>. "Since the poll in 1999 and up until the time of this poll, the percentage of individuals who defined democracy as civil liberties and political rights was, on average, approximately three quarters of the respondents."

The Kingdom's commitment to multilateral institutions, such as the World Trade Organization, has a corollary impact inside Jordan by mandating extensive legislative and regulatory reforms. King Abdullah II's economic reform program, coupled with political stability, has attracted foreign investments.⁸

However, the middle class has not always benefited from such investments. Indeed, there is a general sense that the middle class is shrinking as the gap between wealthy and poor grows. Whether reform can be successful without a growing and secure middle class remains to be seen, but analogous situations outside Jordan do not give reason for optimism. Critics of the economic reform process suggest that while it places a heavy emphasis on export-oriented growth, foreign aid and foreign investment, less attention is paid to social welfare and income distribution.

Royal Will for Reform

While Jordan is a constitutional monarchy where the King and his ministers exercise executive powers, these powers are not absolute. Although the King signs and executes all laws, the National Assembly may override his veto power with a two-third vote of both the upper and lower house. The King may also appoint and dismiss judges by decree, approve amendments to the constitution, declare war, and command the armed forces. The King appoints the prime minister who, in turn, leads the Council of Ministers. Cabinet decisions, court judgments, and the national currency are issued in his name and he appoints the heads of all governorates.

For many years, royal rhetoric and political decrees have been progressive and open to political change and reform. The late King Hussein, in his address to the parliament on November 2, 1985, said, "True democracy can only be embodied in decision-making at the grassroots level, and all other levels, and is not a slogan devoid of substance to be bragged about."⁹

In 1989, the late King Hussein resumed parliamentary elections and relaxed martial laws that he had implemented after 1967 because of the tense security situation resulting from the 1967 War and Jordan's loss of the West Bank to Israel. In 1991, he signed the National Charter with representatives of major Jordanian political groups and parties to revive multi-party democracy after a 34-year ban. The 40-page charter outlines the relationship between the legislative and executive branches of government and provides general guidelines for the government and parliament to write laws consistent with democracy, while reaffirming that Jordan remains a monarchy. In April 1992, King Hussein annulled martial law and, three months later, the parliament formally legalized political parties.

Since these changes, there has been no serious or well-organized challenge to the King's authorities or power. Instead, both the general population and registered political parties look to the King to spearhead political reform. Many progressive reformists listen carefully to his words, using his statements not only to accelerate reform and democratization, but to undermine those who oppose change as well.

In January 2005, King Abdullah II reiterated his father's belief that, "As political development is the gateway to the full participation of all segments of grassroots and civil society institutions in the various aspects of the development process, I assert here that political

⁸ According to the Jordan Investment Board, foreign investments reached around \$835 million for the first three quarters of 2006. Kuwaiti investment in Jordan exceeds \$4 billion.

⁹ "Setting a Good Example," *Emerging Jordan 2005*, Oxford Business Group, p. 28.

development should start at the grassroots level, then move up to decision-making centers, and not vice versa.”¹⁰

Long-term Political Stability

The issue of political stability and security is a top priority for Jordan. Be they citizen or state official, Jordanians are aware that political stability is an asset, especially with the ongoing tensions in neighboring countries. However, there is disagreement on how to maintain and utilize this stability. Some observers suggest that political stability has not been utilized to its full advantage, in terms of human development and political freedoms, and they argue that “status quo forces” have instead used threats to security as a pretext for delaying political reform.

In 2003, The Regional Center on Conflict Prevention in Jordan published a study that found “...that the absence of genuine public participation and accountability in Jordan is intimately connected to a host of questions that affect the country’s longer-term stability.” In their view, without effective political representation, popular participation, and government responsiveness, there can be no adequate “mechanisms to express and channel public discontent.” It concluded that Jordanian stability required a system of governance that is transparent, based on the rule of law, and “...emphasizes the equal rights of all citizens rather than the traditional, informal governance system based on personal contacts and community leadership.”¹¹

The rise of militant groups and the terrorist attacks against three hotels in Amman in November 2005 has animated the debate about stability and security. Immediately after the bombings, a survey found that “...the majority of Jordanians (75.7%) think political reform in Jordan should continue after the terrorist attacks in Amman.”¹² The International Crisis Group agreed that “...any security response must be complemented by a genuine opening of the political system and more equally shared economic opportunity if Jordan is to minimize the risk of further attacks and instability.”¹³

Given Jordan’s continued stability and accelerated political reform processes in neighboring countries, some people are raising questions about whether forces favoring the status quo use the stability card to stymie political reform. A Jordanian scholar, Samer Abu Libdeh, noted on September 16, 2005, that “...reasonably free and fair elections were held in Iraq and the Palestinian Authority, Jordan’s eastern and western neighbors. The fact that elections could proceed in such insecure and politically troubled areas raised both international and domestic pressure on the Jordanian regime to quicken its own pace of reform, especially given its relative security and stability.”¹⁴

¹⁰ King Abdullah II speech. See: Jordanian Foreign Ministry Website, www.mfa.gov.jo/speeches_details.php?id=115&menu_id=26.

¹¹ “Jordan Conflict Profile,” The Regional Center on Conflict Prevention. See: http://www.rccp-jid.org/profile_jordan.htm

¹² “Democratic Transformation and Political Reform in Jordan,” Jordan Center for Social Research, December 2005. See: <http://www.iri.org/mena/jordan/2006-02-07-JordanPoll.asp>

¹³ “Jordan’s 9/11: Dealing with Jihadi Islam.” Middle East Report no. 47, International Crisis Group, November 23, 2005.

¹⁴ Samer Abu Libdeh, “Previewing Jordan’s National Agenda: Strategies for Reform,” *Policy Watch #1032*, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, September 16, 2005.

Political Reform Initiatives

In the past few years, Jordan has witnessed a number of reform initiatives. In late 2002, the Jordanian government launched the “Jordan First” initiative, in an effort to spur reform by focusing citizens’ attention on domestic, rather than regional, issues. The initiative was “...an attempt to define a new social accord between Jordanians...reformulate the state-individual relationship...[and] represent an invitation to civil society institutions and the private sector to raise their contribution in building a modern state through focusing on... political development.”¹⁵

As a result, the King inaugurated a new Ministry of Political Development in 2003. In June 2006, Ali Bibi, strategic planning director for the Ministry, outlined its aim to “...develop Jordan as a model modern Arab state based on the humanistic values we truly believe in. We have identified key strategic objectives to the process of reform and political development in Jordan: women’s empowerment, human rights awareness, political party life development, media development, enhancing youth participation, a participative civil society, and an independent judiciary while forging ahead with economic liberalization and reform.”¹⁶

In early 2005, King Abdullah announced a major political and administrative “decentralization” initiative to redefine the relationship between the center and the provinces. According to the initiative, “The existing governorates—twelve in number, from Irbid in the north to Aqaba in the south—will be combined into a small number (three or four) of development areas or regions.” Each region will directly elect a local assembly that, together with the elected municipal councils, will “...set priorities and draw up plans and programs related to their respective regions. These tasks should no longer be exclusive to central decision-makers because the people of each region are more aware of their interests and needs.”¹⁷ King Abdullah II announced in a March 15, 2005 interview with the late Peter Jennings, “By decentralization, by being able to create three or four political parties as opposed to 30, I think we can strengthen the institutions, so that the crown can take a step back and people can take a step forward.”¹⁸

King Abdullah II has been consistent in his desire for reform. In his letter of designation to the current government, he said, “Reform is no longer an option only, but has become a necessity of life.” He continued, “The government is invited, rather required, to enshrine reform as a concept and meaning in its daily agenda, given that democracy is a course of action never to be renounced. As everyone knows, democracy is a culture and exercise and not just mere slogans to be raised on occasions. From this premise, the government must institutionalize the process of reform, modernization and development.”

In late 2005, King Abdullah II announced a new, ambitious National Agenda and established a 26-member steering committee by royal decree. The committee consists of former ministers, politicians, academics and business people, and is chaired by former Foreign Minister Marwan Mu’asher, known in Jordan as the “leading” reformist. The initiative is a blueprint for political, economic, and social change in the coming decade. The purpose of the Agenda is “...to improve the quality of life for Jordanians, build a strong economy, guarantee

¹⁵ Embassy of Jordan in Washington, “Jordan First National Campaign.” See: <http://www.jordanembassyus.org/new/aboutjordan/er1.shtml>

¹⁶ Conference, “Political Reform in Jordan,” <http://www.medeab.be/index.html?doc=1752>

¹⁷ King Abdullah II, speech, January 26, 2005. See: http://www.mfa.gov.jo/speeches_details.php?id=115&menu_id=26

¹⁸ See: <http://abcnews.go.com/WNT/story?id=583538&page=1>

basic freedoms and human rights, and strengthen democracy and cultural and political pluralism.”¹⁹

The National Agenda took a holistic approach to reform, but emphasized the necessity for long-term reform. “Past efforts to reform the public service have provided much to build on, but they did not go far enough, and were not always sustained for long enough,” it explained.²⁰ It criticized how “...Jordan has witnessed over the past two decades several reform plans under different names but the level of implementation by governments varied, particularly with regards to pressing social challenges such as poverty and unemployment,” and noted how this sparked skepticism about the government's ability to achieve desired reform.

In July 2006, the King sponsored a “We Are all Jordan” forum that, after intensive discussions with a large number of key Jordanian social and political figures, put 30 issues on the table for discussion and prioritization. After two days of open deliberation, a forum of 700 Jordanians—government officials, members of Parliament, academics, civil society activists, journalists, community leaders, private sector leaders, and political party leaders—issued a 30-page action plan. The plan includes categorized recommendations for political reform and other priority-issues. This forum attempted to address the issue of ownership and inclusiveness in Jordan and identified deadlines and mechanisms for reaching consensus and implementing reform priorities. The We Are all Jordan commission was established as a “Royal Advisory Body” and the government announced that the recommendations of the forum would serve as guidelines for the government.²¹

Finally, in September 2006, the King sponsored the youth version of the “We Are all Jordan” forum where 700 youths actively participated in the discussions and provided recommendations on various issues. The youth focused much of their attention on the issue of corruption. The King directed the government, in October 2006, to establish the “We Are all Jordan” Youth Commission to enhance the youth’s role in the socio-economic and political plans targeting them. The King emphasized the need to build a new generation of young leaders who are able to modernize Jordan.

These reform initiatives have been praised because they: show political will from the top leadership to push reform and legitimize it; acknowledge the need for serious but gradual changes; identify reform priorities; emphasize ownership and inclusiveness; foster debate; and provide ground for comprehensive solutions. However, significant criticism remains.

Obstacles and Slow Processes

Criticism of the government’s reform efforts stems from the gap between rhetoric and reality. Some criticize the initiatives’ redundancy, their slow implementation, and the absence of public engagement. Others focus on weaknesses within each of the initiatives, such as the lack of deadlines and means of implementation, the incomplete reform of the public service, and the lack of a workable monitoring and evaluation system. Still, others see more significant structural problems, such as the lack of government accountability and free and fair elections. Others see Jordan taking “one step forward and two steps backward”, insisting that these initiatives have been publicized to impress the West in order to maintain foreign assistance, while further restricting some rights. Nor is every recommended initiative actually implemented. Human Rights Watch noted in a June 2006 report that while the National

¹⁹ National Agenda, 2005, <http://www.nationalagenda.jo/Portals/0/EnglishBooklet.pdf>

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ The main issues discussed in the political reform sessions are good governance, political party development, and human rights.

Agenda made recommendations to accommodate journalists' demands, "The new government and some parliamentarians, however, have refused to include these recommendations in a new draft of the Media Law."²²

Also hampering reform is the public's reluctance to openly criticize the government. A poll conducted by Jordan University's Center for Strategic Studies suggests that 74.6 percent of Jordanians fear punishment or retribution by the authorities for criticizing the government.²³ The process faces a real dilemma. In a April 2005 article, Robert Satloff, executive director of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, suggested that "...Jordan is a small country with an entrenched political elite; real political change cannot occur without stepping on some powerful toes. At the same time, the palace is unlikely to press forward with a scheme that could turn its most loyal supporters into aggrieved critics."²⁴ U.S. commentator David Ignatius observed that, regardless of the King's sincerity, "...not all agencies were in line with his program...One arm was working against the other."²⁵ Indeed, another poll conducted by the Center for Strategic Studies suggested that when it comes to domestic issues that pose obstacles to reform, Jordanians identify corruption, favoritism, and nepotism as the main problems, followed by fear of an Islamist takeover in parliament, and tribalism.²⁶

Criticism even comes from within the reform movement itself. On May 11, 2006, Muasher observed, "The National Agenda faces obstacles from status quo forces in Jordan, who see [it] as a threat to their privilege and position, and from the cynicism and skepticism of the general public, who question whether the political will exists to implement the plan."²⁷

The immaturity of political parties also hampers dissent and reform. There are 34 political parties in Jordan; the strongest among them is the Islamic Action Front, with 17 elected members in the Parliament. Yet citizens remain skeptical. Political rhetoric is often radical, ideological, nationalist, and lacks pragmatism. The political parties fail to engage people. In a July 2006 opinion poll, conducted by the Center for Strategic Studies, more than 90 percent of Jordanians did not think that existing political parties were capable of representing their political, social and economic aspirations.²⁸

Samer Abu Libdeh noted in a recent article that "...despite these efforts to bolster civil society and make political life more inclusive and representative, public confidence and interest in political parties remain extremely low. According to a recent poll conducted by the Jordan Center for Social Research, barely 2 percent of Jordanians are considering joining a party. More than 70 percent of the respondents said they had not even heard about the draft law."²⁹

²² "Jordan: Rise in Arrests Restricting Free Speech, Government Must Keep Promise to End Abusive Practices," Human Rights Watch, June 17, 2006.

See: <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2006/06/17/jordan13574.htm>

²³ "Democracy in Jordan—2005," Jordan University's Center for Strategic Studies, September 2005. See: <http://www.css-jordan.org/polls/democracy/DemocracyPoll2005-en.pdf>.

²⁴ Robert Satloff, "A Reform Initiative in Jordan: Trying to Keep Pace with Iraqi and Palestinian Elections," *Policy Watch #953*, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, February 4, 2005. See: <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=2249>

²⁵ David Ignatius, "We Need to Accelerate," *The Washington Post*, June 8, 2005.

²⁶ Batir Wardam, "Culture of Political Fear in Jordan," *Jordan Watch*, July 28, 2006. See: <http://batir.jeezan.com/archive/2006/7/75224.html>

²⁷ Marwan Muasher, speech, "Arab Reforms Slow March," May 11, 2006. See: <http://www.brook.edu/fp/saban/events/20060511.htm>

²⁸ Alia Shukri Hamzeh, "Citizens Believe Level of Democracy Improved in 2005," *The Jordan Times*, September 7, 2005.

²⁹ Samer Abu Libdeh, "Jordan Looks Inward: The Hashemite Kingdom in the Wake of Zarqawi and the Hamas-Israel Clash," *Policy Watch #1120*, The Washington Institute for Near East Affairs, July 7, 2006. See: <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=2485>

Civil society, viewed by Jordanian leadership as a springboard for reform, is a relatively new phenomenon in Jordan and thus remains weak. In outlining the situation of civil society in Jordan on April 20, 2005, Bassem Awadallah, the director of the King's office, stated, "Currently, all NGOs operating in Jordan must be registered with the Ministry of the Interior or the Ministry of Social Development, a policy that can result in unnecessary restrictions. A new draft law is being prepared that will ensure the proper role for NGOs in Jordanian civil society." Fear of Islamism is also a major impediment. Muasher suggests, "Some in Jordan and elsewhere fear that political reform will enable Islamist forces to rise to power along an Iranian or Hamas model. For this reason, all political parties will be required to commit to principles of political and cultural diversity and of peaceful means. An environment of political freedom and government encouragement of party life would enable a pluralistic system that would temper the role of the Islamists and preserve democratic practices."³⁰

Way Forward?

The reform process continues despite these obstacles and there are clear steps that can help it to proceed. The intense debate among the elite has identified many of these obstacles and has generated a few ideas about how to move forward.

At a Washington conference, Awadallah said, "Jordan can achieve all the accountability and transparency in the world, but unless it has a budget that allocates the funding needed to implement reform, the average Jordanian will neither see nor feel change."³¹ In its 2006 budget, the Jordanian government allocated \$150 million to implement the National Agenda.

Fares Braizat, a researcher at the Center for Strategic Studies at the University of Jordan, suggests that to further public enfranchisement in reform, the government should allow the winning majority parliamentary coalition to form a government. These recommendations are also reflected in the International Crisis Group's November 2005 report. This report recommends the government: "(a) Review laws and decisions that curtail political freedoms and, where necessary amend or—as in the specific case of the draft professional associations law—abandon them; (b) draft a new electoral law providing a more accurate popular representation; and (c) form a broader, more inclusive government coalition incorporating opposition tendencies in order to carry out these political reforms and implement the proposed National Agenda, including the long-awaited new electoral law."³²

There are also simple steps that can advance the pace of reform, such as elections, public opinion surveys, public-awareness campaigns, public libraries and access to information, producing statistics and indicators, including democratic curriculum in the educational system, and introducing new ombudsmen positions to catalyze the reform process. Some believe that an enlarged middle class, a more active and meaningful cultural life, real academic freedoms, active think tanks and strategic centers, more professional and open media outlets, international human rights standards reflected in national law, and youth engagement might enrich the process.

³⁰ Marwan Muasher, speech, "Arab Reforms Slow March," May 11, 2006. See: <http://www.brook.edu/fp/saban/events/20060511.htm>

³¹ Bassem Awadallah, speech, "Reform and Development in Jordan: Toward an Arab Renaissance," May 5, 2005. See: <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=2308>

³² "Jordan's 9/11: Dealing with Jihadi Islam." Middle East Report no. 47, International Crisis Group, November 23, 2005.

Conclusion

The King has asserted the need for political reform in Jordan. The process is slow and tools are still needed, along with a proper budget and workable mechanisms of implementation. The international community expects Jordan to provide a liberal, moderate, and democratic role for the region and the Jordanian people, who themselves expect results, support democracy, and champion reform.

Current reform efforts revolve around the completion of draft laws and their adoption³³, while building workable and independent mechanisms that instill democratic values into public skills and help implement the National Agenda and other initiatives. Learning from other successful experiences in the region might expedite the process.

The process cannot be efficient or possible without monitoring tools and evaluation indicators. There is no need to start from scratch, but only to improve the efficiency and mandate of existing democratic institutes. Today, there are many elements in Jordan's environment and character that, if utilized, would make reform attainable and more feasible. A participatory reform process will help in solidifying a unified Jordanian identity.

There are missing elements and workable mechanisms that need to be made available; empowering civil society, addressing real obstacles in an open fashion, and engaging the public. More attention should be given to constructive criticism and recommendations.

Many observers and politicians see Jordan as a democratic role model that should be emulated by other Arab countries, although paradoxically, Jordan could also build on the positive reform experiences of others in the region. The steps taken toward political reform have addressed many issues and answered many questions. At the same time, they have raised some concerns: What are the obstacles to political reform? What is the best way to address and overcome them? What are political reform priorities, and is there a need to modify them? How is a sustainable, environment for political reform created, and how is the public engaged? Finally, what is missing? When Jordanians are given the power to decide the answers to these questions, the reform process will really begin.

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³³ A Royal Decree was issued in August 2006 to summon the Parliament for an extraordinary session to discuss a package of 42 draft laws provided by the government, some of them controversial. Those amendments already adopted targeted legislation which had previously drawn criticism from local and international human rights organizations.